HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 098 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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● (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the defence committee.

Minister, members of the Canadian Forces, and department officials, thank you for coming today to discuss the 2018–19 main estimates. I think this is the first time in the 42nd Parliament that we've done it in committee. We've done it in committee of the whole a couple of times.

Minister, I'm going to give you the floor for your opening remarks. The floor is yours.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Chair, members of the standing committee, thank you very much for having me here today. It's kind of nice not to be in the committee of the whole, although I kind of miss that too. We had such a bonding experience for all of us during those four hours.

I appreciate the opportunity for me to present on the main estimates for national defence for the fiscal year 2018–19. I'm very pleased to appear before you in the company of my deputy minister, Jody Thomas; Shelly Bruce, the acting chief of the Communications Security Establishment; Rear-Admiral Darren Hawco, who is the acting vice chief of the defence staff; and senior members of my defence team who you see here today.

In just over a week, we will celebrate the anniversary of the launch of our new defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", SSE. The policy was not only a road map for the next 20 years, but it was a commitment to do defence differently, a commitment to move toward a mindset of investing in our armed forces. Through SSE, we have committed to increasing the annual defence spending to $32 billion over the next 10 years, an increase of over 70%.

In one year's time, we have accomplished quite a bit and we are very proud of that and very proud of the team that has accomplished this.

Today I will detail some of the most significant accomplishments in line with our main estimates. In SSE, we said that care for Canadian Armed Forces personnel would be our primary focus. We said we would offer enhanced tax relief for Canadian Armed Forces members on deployed international operations. We have done that. We said we would launch a suicide prevention strategy with Veterans Affairs. We did that. We promised to integrate gender-based analysis plus into our activities, and that has happened. We announced $6 million in new annual funding for the military family resource centres, and that has been delivered. We said we would appoint a diversity champion and implement a new charter for the sexual misconduct response centre. This also has been done. We said we would further modernize the military justice system. We have tabled Bill C-77, which introduces a declaration of victims' rights and will make the overall system more efficient.

On innovation, we promised to introduce the IDEaS program to seek out the best defence and security ideas across the country. That has been done.

On procurement, we said we would give the military what it needs to do the important work. That is well under way. We said we would explore an interim fighter capability now. We are examining the acquisition of 18 Australian F-18s. We said we would also launch an open competition for the future fighter, and that has been done. We also have a new fleet of 16 Airbus C-295s for search and rescue. The first one is scheduled to be delivered at the end of 2019. For the navy, we are acquiring a fleet of five to six Arctic patrol ships, the first of which is expected next year. We are hiring more people into the materiel group to help deliver on these and other procurement projects.

In many ways, the successful implementation of our policy so far is due to the way we manage our cash flow and support a flexible funding model. In last year's main and supplementary estimates, we requested $20.97 billion. For the second year in a row, we will have no lapsed funding. This has not been done at DND since the early 2000s. Instead, we will be carrying over $677 million. This is done for a very good reason: the department cannot reduce this further without taking the chance of overspending its appropriation at the end of the year.

A small, unplanned change in forecast may make such a difference. For example, a one-cent fluctuation in the U.S. exchange rate costs us approximately $16 million. All of this reflects better forecasting for capital investments and other improved financial management practices. In addition to reducing the discrepancies between forecasted and actual spending, the department only requests funding it knows it can spend. For instance, we planned to bring in $6 billion last year for capital investments, but ended up requesting just $4 billion. Here's why: about 30% of the funds were unspent because we were able to cut costs through better contracts and unused risk mitigation strategy, which is a good thing.

● (0850)

For example, in some cases we put aside funding to pay for intellectual property, but this expense did not materialize over the first year of the projects, and 27% of the unspent funds were the result of our own internal processes and the additional time required to analyze options for some of the projects. We will continue to review our project management process to find greater efficiencies.

Another 42% of the unspent money is related to delays in delivering goods and services by industry. Simply put, we will not pay for non-performance. We take this extremely seriously. This is why we are introducing new initiatives to increase our collaboration with industry and help reduce such delays.

Other changes to our financial management have also helped us to get to where we are today. Our shift to the accrual basis of accounting enables better, longer-term planning of defence capabilities over the next 20-year period. Because our funding model is flexible, we are not forced to spend money before it is the right time to do so. This strategy to request funds only when they are needed offers greater transparency to parliamentarians and to Canadians.

Also in the vein of openness and transparency is our plan to release our first defence investment plan publicly. This will be done very shortly. This publication will ensure that Canadians and the defence industry can see where we will be making capital investments so they can engage with us accordingly. In fact, I look forward to speaking about the plan with industry professionals tomorrow at CANSEC.

So far, I have focused on the work that we are doing to support the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces, but I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to reflect upon what they have accomplished this past year.

At home, we have performed life-saving evacuations of Canadians at risk from wildfires and offered critical assistance to flood relief efforts in Ontario, New Brunswick, and British Columbia.

Abroad, about 1,900 personnel are currently deployed on 18 active international operations, including in Latvia, Iraq, and Ukraine. As you know, we will deploy an air task force to Mali as part of our commitment to peace support operations.

So, Mr. Chair, all of this brings us to the funds we are requesting under these main estimates. We have achieved tremendous momentum through good work in the last year. The task at hand is to build upon that momentum, continue supporting our forces, and serve Canadians. For that, we are requesting $20.38 billion. That is $1.7 billion more than last year, or a 9.2% increase.

Within this, $1 billion is for operating expenses, $658 million is for capital expenditures, $12 million is for grants and contributions, and $9.2 million is for statutory allocations.

The difference between the $20.38 billion in the main estimates and the $21 billion that appears for the fiscal year in SSE will be covered by requests made through the supplementary estimates process. Those costs relate mostly to operations and capital projects.

We recognize how complex the defence budget is, so our CFO and I will be happy to walk you through any of the budgeting in detail so that we can provide further clarity.

Let me assure you that we remain on track to implement our defence policy over the next 20 years.

I am also requesting $624.9 million for the Communications Security Establishment. That is roughly $28.9 million more than in last year's main estimates. These funds will help maintain the security of our IT systems while ensuring that the sensitive information Canadians entrust to government is protected.

Mr. Chair, before I close, I would like to take a moment to thank all the parliamentarians for the tremendous work that all of you have done, and on that note, I'll be happy to take any of your questions.

Thank you.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Just a reminder to members that we have the minister, as per the notice of meeting, for about an hour, and then we'll go to department officials.

I'm going to give the first question to MP Spengemann. The floor is yours.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

Good morning, Minister. It's great to be with you and your senior staff.

The committee is currently doing a study on UN peacekeeping. I wanted to take advantage of your presence this morning to ask you about the main estimates. There's an appropriation of I think $8.9 billion in funding for ready forces personnel. I'm wondering if you could elaborate, in a bit of detail, on how that relates to Canada's commitment to UN peacekeeping, and convey to the committee your vision for the way forward in peacekeeping and peace operations.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll give you the overall aspect, and then I'll turn it over to the officials to provide greater detail on the financial side.

One of the things we know is that we have to do peacekeeping differently. This is not the peacekeeping of the past. We have to look at what has changed from the past and adjust our methodology, making sure that we contribute to the United Nations and help improve the reforms they too are undertaking. We know that multiple missions are going on. From this, how do we look at working together with like-minded nations to improve the overall system? This is one of the reasons why smart pledging is something that the UN has been asking for for some time. Smart pledging will make sure that high-capability assets can be delivered for multiple missions. One of those capabilities is helicopters, which we're providing to Mali.

The other aspect is about how we do training differently. We need to be able to look at capacity-building differently. Canada has a very unique experience on this, and we will be able to do this. How do we look at reducing recruitment numbers into radical organizations? This is where the Vancouver principles come into play. I want to thank Roméo Dallaire and the Dallaire initiative for their tremendous work on this.

Plus, there's the Elsie initiative. We know—research shows—that having more women on peacekeeping operations helps reduce conflict. How do we incentivize that? This is where the Elsie initiative also comes into play.

Those are the aspects of what we're doing. In terms of the actual details of costing stuff out, I'll turn it over to the officials.

● (0900)

Ms. Jody Thomas (Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence): In terms of peacekeeping operations, we intend to deploy 250 CAF members, starting in the summer, for a 12-month mission, as you're aware. The budget for that is in two parts. There's the yearly flying rate for the air force, for the helicopters we're sending. We're sending two Chinooks and four Griffon helicopters. The other cost for that, of course, is the cost of the personnel.

It's straightforward. We will be reporting on it as we proceed with the operation.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much.

I have a brief follow-up question, if I may. Peace operations have become very complex. In a way, it's almost a whole-of-government exercise to make sure that we do things well and that we devolve on to nascent governments if it involves a failed state.

Could you comment briefly on the importance of civilian professionals being in the field alongside Canadian Forces members who are doing the governance work, and the integration of those two efforts?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I think we all know, given current conflict today, that the military alone cannot resolve conflict. We've been very clear about this as a government, not only with the United Nations but what we're doing in Iraq. We're presenting a whole-of-government approach that provides all the tools necessary for the current situation that's taking place, and, more importantly, being able to adjust the resources as a government.

I'll give you an example. In any situation, sometimes you need to be able to put in military resources more, based on the development work. But everything has to work together seamlessly so that you can put in the right development work that can support the military efforts and the right capacity-building. Now, this is easily said, but it's extremely difficult to do. More importantly, it's getting a lot of our allies to also do more of this, and getting the UN contributing nations to focus on this as well. The civilian component is absolutely crucial for making sure that the development and the capacity-building are delivered in a timely manner that helps deal with some of the issues that started the conflict. That will be essential as we move forward.

This is one thing for sure: Canada cannot do it alone. We'll contribute to the overall success of the UN.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much for that, Minister.

My next question is about cybersecurity. Budget 2018 committed $155 million for the creation of a new Canadian centre for cybersecurity. That's to establish a single, unified government source of expertise, guidance, services, and support. This centre would provide Canadian citizens and businesses with a clear and trusted place to turn to for cybersecurity. In fact, I've had corporate stakeholders come up to me as a member of the standing committee on public safety and ask me what the Canadian government is doing in the field of cybersecurity.

With respect to the main estimates and the increase we have for CSE, I'm wondering if you could talk to us briefly about the importance of cybersecurity for our government and also for our civilian infrastructure.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: In addition to the investments that we, as government, are making in cybersecurity, it's going to require not only the right resources, but the right legislation as well. As we know, there is a greater concern around cybersecurity. We just heard yesterday in the news about the potential hack on two of our banks. I can assure Canadians, and also Parliament, that we have very bright Canadians working in CSE who are doing tremendous work.

We have tremendous capabilities, but our legislation has not kept up with this. Bill C-59 will give the authority to our agencies so we can actually utilize these capabilities. Part of that is working with industry to assist industry and work in far greater collaboration to support their effort. The cyber centre will be able to do just that. We have spoken to our allies about this, and looked at what actually works and what does not work.

More importantly, we also have to look at the evolving changes. We're going to make sure we have the right money and the research so we stay at the cutting edge. I'm confident that with the brilliant minds we have at the CSE and some of our other agencies, we will be able to remain there.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thanks very much.

The Chair: We will go to MP Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here along with all the officials from the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. I appreciate all the hard work you all do in support of our troops and promoting Canadians' interests abroad.

Mr. Minister, Prime Minister Trudeau announced back in 2016 that we were going to deploy 600 UN peacekeepers and 150 police officers. Are we going to make that target, or is it just the 200 you're talking about now who are going to Mali?

● (0905)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No. The announcement we have made is about giving us the flexibility of having up to 600 people we can deploy, but we wanted to do it in a smart manner that contributes to the United Nations. As I stated before, the strategy we have put forward to the UN is not something we have done in isolation. We've actually worked with the UN and with some of our like-minded partners on how we can improve the system of the United Nations and make it more effective.

Traditionally, we have done peacekeeping where we picked a piece of ground, and then we are part of the actual system. How can we make the overall system better? For example, we can—

Mr. James Bezan: I have a lot of questions on Mali, and I want to get to them. You announced in November 2016 in an interview you did with the *Toronto Star* on November 11—on Remembrance Day—that we were going to deploy 600 troops to Africa. Here we are, two years since the Prime Minister originally said that we were going to be deploying troops on UN peacekeeping. It hasn't happened yet. It's going to be August. Why is it taking so long?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We now have the flexibility to go up to 600...based on our deployment into Mali and the tactical airlift that will go into Entebbe. We now have the flexibility based on the plan that we have. We can go up to 600, and we will make adjustments. As part of the smart pledges, we will not only be there, for example, for an indefinite period. We will be in a smart rotation. You will see the numbers fluctuate based on what we're actually providing.

Mr. James Bezan: Under your watch, we've seen that UN peacekeeping numbers now have gone to the lowest levels in history, since we've started UN missions. In March, it was down to 22. During our tenure, it was anywhere from 150 to 300. You're down to 22. This month it's maybe 46.

Isn't that embarrassing, when you're talking 600 but you only have 40-some-odd troops actually deployed?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No. The main objective is to make sure we're actually effective. That is a poor measurement, when you look at the numbers. We said, about making the missions far more effective, when we put a high capability into the United Nations sometimes we will be up to 600. Sometimes we will be lower, depending on the rotation. We are going to do peacekeeping differently. We're going to make sure we put the right assets into place, working with like-minded partners, to make the multiple missions more effective.

Mr. James Bezan: It's taking a long time. From the time you made the announcement back in 2016, to the time we're going to deploy, is almost two years. We deployed an air task force into Operation Impact, but measured in weeks not years. We put out our CF-18s; six went over. We had refuelling capabilities, and two Auroras. Over 400 members of the armed forces were on the ground in Kuwait supporting Operation Impact, never mind special operations forces. That happened in weeks.

The armed forces know how to deploy. That's what they do. Why is it taking so long to move a small helicopter air task force to Mali?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Let me assure you that when it comes to the planning it does take a little bit longer than that, but we also promised to making sure—and I think you can agree with me—that anywhere we send our troops, one, we are going to send them for the right purpose, that they can meet the right mandate, and that we can advance the capability that the UN is requesting, but more important is making sure that when we send our troops they are going to be safe and they're going to have the right rules of engagement.

We're going to do our due diligence. I will not speed up the process just for the sake of meeting a certain timeline for any type of a competitive nature. We will always make sure that when we make a decision we're going to achieve the mission and our troops are going to be able to achieve the mission because they have the right training and equipment.

Mr. James Bezan: Minister, were you aware, when you committed our troops to the UN mission in Mali that they could be repurposed by the UN to support the G5 Sahel anti-terrorism operations?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Sorry. I didn't get that.

Mr. James Bezan: When you made the decision to send our troops to support the UN mission in Mali, were you aware that the United Nations has a caveat that they can use our resources, our troops, to support the G5 Sahel counterterrorism operations?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We're here to support the work that the United Nations is doing, and in functions they do work with other partners. We have given the flexibility with our Canadian Forces. If it's a time of need, we will always be supporting our allies, but we're there to support MINUSMA, the mission, and the contributions that we are making are going to do just that.

This is about having a smart pledge, working with like-minded partners, providing a helicopter capability that's focused on medical evacuation and transport, but having the right flexibility in making sure that we don't repeat some of the issues that have gone on in the past and making sure that our commanders on the ground have the flexibility to be able to make the right adjustments to exercise the right support.

● (0910)

Mr. James Bezan: So that brings about the question, then: who is in charge? Command and control: do we maintain control over our troops or is that actually the United Nations, and—

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Full command of this remains under our control, under the Canadian Armed Forces. The Canadian task force commander also has the command. The command relationship is properly set up by the chief of the defence staff, but full command is always retained under us.

Mr. James Bezan: Minister, can you explain how the Mali mission, under the UN and also under the G5 Sahel counterterrorism operations, is in Canada's national interest?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: As we have seen now, whether it's Mali or any conflict around the world, conflicts have significantly increased. We all need to do our part. We as a government have consistently said that we need to take a greater role in a multilateral environment. We have also seen how, even here in Canada, in our own island of stability, we can have significant issues that can pop up. We need to do our part as like-minded—

Mr. James Bezan: Minister, I have only a few seconds left.

How long are we deploying our troops—

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We're going to be deploying for—

Mr. James Bezan: —for the UN in Mali?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: For this mission to Mali, it will be for one year.

Mr. James Bezan: One year? You announced, actually, in the *Toronto Star* that it would be a three-year mission—back in 2016.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, but if you look at what I said, the overall context of the peacekeeping portion is a three-year commitment with—

Mr. James Bezan: I wish you wouldn't use that term "peacekeeping" when we're supporting counterterrorism operations with the G5 Sahel. It's not at all peacekeeping.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Well, whether you want to call it.... We can go into vocabulary topics if you'd like, but what I'm saying is that the overall peacekeeping mission is a three-year commitment. With the smart pledging, one of the smart pledges that we have committed to is for a one-year helicopter deployment to Mali, but the peacekeeping commitment, or peace operations commitment, that we have offered to the UN is a three-year commitment that has the Elsie initiative, smart pledging as well, and capacity-building training built into it.

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold it there.

MP Garrison, the floor is yours.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Minister and the officials for being here this morning.

As the committee is doing a study on peacekeeping, I'm going to turn back more directly to the estimates and some of the things the minister mentioned in his opening statement.

You pointed out in "Strong, Secure, Engaged" that care for Canadian Armed Forces personnel would be the main focus of what's going on. I'm hoping when you say that, of course.... There is no specific mention of reserves or DND civilian employees, so I'm taking that in its broadest context.

The minister might expect that I will ask again about the Phoenix pay system, and my question here is pretty simple. Do you have an estimate in your department for when the problems with Phoenix for DND civilian employees will be resolved? It's been two years now under the system, and we continue to have new cases. Some of the outstanding cases, after they were raised here, have been dealt with, but the one-off isn't really solving systemic problems. Do you have an estimate of when people can expect to be paid fairly and not have to worry about what's coming in their pay cheque at the end of the month?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll have the deputy give the details of it, but you're right. This is a problem that's gone on for far too long. This is unacceptable and people deserve to be paid on time for the work that they're doing.

We are committed to making sure that this is done. And this is not strictly from a National Defence perspective for our civilians, this is for the wider government. We did take steps very early on to make sure, when we discovered some of the problems, that the military would not be put onto the Phoenix system, protecting a large number of our people there. Regrettably, our civilian workforce has been affected, but we are working diligently in trying to resolve this as quickly as possible.

Deputy.

Ms. Jody Thomas: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Garrison, for the question. I appreciate your concern for the civilian employees of the department.

I don't have an estimate for when problems will be resolved. Within our department, we have tripled our number of compensation staff from 50 to almost 150 across the country to provide one-on-one support to our employees. We are working with PSPC to move Defence to a new process, which we think will show an immediate, over six months, result and a 30% reduction in the number of backlogged cases and problematic cases. We're a big department, so setting us up for this new process is a significant amount of work and it takes a number of people. We are, as aggressively as possible, doing everything we can across the system to improve the situation for Defence employees and then, as you're aware and the minister is aware, any one-on-one case we receive we'll handle as a discrete one-off to try to resolve it.

● (0915)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Given that we have across the hall some other considerations going on with the Phoenix pay system, I want to move to some other personnel questions.

In "Strong, Secure, Engaged", you set some ambitious goals for increasing the number of regular members and reservists by improving both recruitment and retention. Can you tell us how we're doing in terms of those goals? I think it was 70,500 regular and 27,000 reservists. Are we making significant progress towards reaching those goals?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Not only are the recruit numbers, I believe, up, but the focus I'm putting on it is not just the numbers. We want to make sure that we have the right system in place as we recruit. It's one thing to recruit, and I've said this a number of times before. "Strong, Secure, Engaged" is about making sure that people who are recruited are going through a new training system that looks at making sure that the environment that is created around them is one that is inclusive for all and respectful of all, with a new way of doing everything from physical training, to how their mental wellness is going to be achieved, and including their eating. More importantly, the next is the actual training system that kicks in.

The numbers are going well. As we recruit the numbers, if we don't look at improving those systems, and great progress has been made on this.... We also want to make sure that retention is also going to be there.

Mr. Randall Garrison: We know that certainly locally there were some significant delays in training programs that were causing people to reconsider their future in the Canadian Forces because they had to wait too long for that training.

I do want to congratulate the minister on diversity initiatives. There are some very positive things happening in the Canadian Armed Forces and on the bases. The positive space initiative, and the appointment of a diversity champion, I think, are very positive initiatives.

However, in December 2016 this committee asked you to look at revising service records for those who were kicked out of the military for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and you promised a progress report. Is today the day we get that progress report, because people have waited a very long time to have these service records revised?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: The work is going on. We've committed to this, and in fact I was having a conversation yesterday on this to making sure that things are moving well.

Mr. Randall Garrison: How many records have been revised?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: This is about expunging the criminal records, but also making sure the annotations on the service records are done.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm not talking about the criminal records. I'm talking about changing from some form of dishonourable discharge to an honourable discharge. Is that process taking place?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: It is under way, I can assure you of that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Some records have been revised? People have been receiving that?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I don't have the exact numbers on that, but, yes, they have been.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Would you commit to providing a report to this committee on the progress in revising those service records?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, as soon as I have greater details on that, I will definitely make sure you have that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay, thank you very much.

The Chair: You have about a minute left.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I will turn to the issue of Agent Orange at Gagetown. I know that the military did extensive studies but we've had some new eyewitness testimony about, perhaps, other sites where Agent Orange may have been buried on the base. Given that we know it causes cancer and given that we know we've had many serious problems as a result of the handling of Agent Orange at Gagetown, is there any reason why you wouldn't take seriously these new reports and investigate them? The costs of further cases of Agent Orange are huge, so a very small investment would allow you to look into this new testimony about, perhaps, other sites where Agent Orange was buried.

Is there any reason why you're not going to do this?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No.

First of all, one thing I want to correct you on is how seriously we take the safety of our personnel, not only the military folks but also civilians, as well as the wider community. A significant amount of work has also been done in the past on this, and we are taking any disinformation very seriously to make sure that no stone is left unturned, to make sure we have the proper assurance that everything is being done.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Will you talk to the eyewitness and review the testimony on the actual site that this person says—

● (0920)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I can assure you, based on the information, that work is being done on this.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Robillard is next.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to you, Mr. Minister, and to all the witnesses.

In the listing of the 2018-19 transfer payments, the grant program to the national offices of the Cadet Leagues of Canada will be increased to $474,000 for each of the three following leagues: the Navy League of Canada, the Army Cadet League of Canada, and the Air Cadet League of Canada.

On which factors did the Department of National Defence base its request to increase the funding for this program?

What results does the Department of National Defence wish to obtain by increasing funds for these grants?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: As you know, and I've said this publicly, any time I speak with cadets I talk about the cadet program. In my opinion, it is the number one leadership program in the country. It's not just an introduction to the military; it's almost an introduction on how to be successful in life. So many of our cadets have gone on to other things, whether it's to senior ranks in the military or as CEOs in other things, and they've spoken about the cadet leadership program. That's what these investments are about; making sure we continue to support our cadet program. We do need to look at some of the adjustments that were made in the past and how we can improve upon things.

One of the focuses that I still need to do a little more work on is how to make summer training camps more accessible to more cadets, where not everybody gets to go. In some parts of Canada a higher percentage from the various units end up going but in other cases there are not. I'm looking into that. I don't have the full information on that. That's one thing I want to improve. When you bring in cadets from all across Canada, or least the regions, they have a tremendous impact on training with one another, and I want to continue that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: The main estimates 2018-19 include a request for an increase of $12 million over what was in the main estimates 2017-18, in terms of grants and contributions from the Department of National Defence.

Why are you asking for an increase of $26.9 million to fund the North Atlantic Treaty Organization contribution program, with respect to the NATO military budget? In the main estimates 2017-18, the funding was $77,992,408, which has increased to $104,907,000 in the main estimates 2018-2019.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm going to have our CFO answer that question.

In terms of NATO the contributions we have made in personnel, in our contribution to Latvia, our frigates in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea are a persistent presence with air policing as well. In my last NATO defence ministerial meeting, I was very proud to announce that we were returning to the AWACS program, which the previous government had abruptly pulled us out of. This is about showing greater unity. Canada has always played a leadership role. We were one of the founding members on this. Our contributions, not only financial, but also in personnel, are significant. I can assure you this is welcomed by so many of our partners, especially when I met with the Secretary-General, whom I got to host at NORAD headquarters. We demonstrated to them that while Canada is making great contributions to NATO, we also have other responsibilities, especially to North America when it comes to NORAD, and also to the Asia-Pacific.

For more detail, I'd like to pass it over to the CFO.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Rochette (Assistant Deputy Minister (Finance) and Chief Financial Officer, Department of National Defence): Thank you very much for your question.

We have three budgets for NATO. In total, we spend about $140 million per year on NATO.

Each year, we work with NATO, which has a formula it uses for each of the budgets: infrastructure, personnel, and other expenses. We see variations from year to year. These variations depend on what NATO decides to do in the following year. For example, if there is an increase in expenditures for certain operations this year, we will have to transfer funds in response. It is based on the formula that NATO uses.

● (0925)

Mr. Yves Robillard: Of all the ongoing defence procurement projects, the Canadian surface combatant project is the most expensive. The Department of National Defence estimates that it will cost between $56 billion and $60 billion to acquire those warships.

What is the current state of the Canadian surface combatant project? What milestones does the Department of National Defence plan to achieve in this fiscal year?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: A lot of great work has been done on the Canadian surface combatant, but more important is how we have been working with Minister Qualtrough on this and how we can speed up the process. We've taken decisions very early on in our tenure to speed up the process on the selection. That is where we're at right now. We're looking at a decision to be made in the not-so-distant future.

This is a program that we can be extremely proud of. One thing I also want to stress is the fact that when it comes to surface combatants themselves, we kind of look at the actual ship, but the real work is going to be done on the integration of the systems inside. This is where it's a great benefit for our Canadian defence industry, building a system that's going to meet the needs of the future. If I had more time, I would love to talk more about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

It's nice to see you this morning, Mr. Gerretsen. You have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's nice to see you, too.

Minister, you might recall, when you've come before the committee, I've focused a lot of my questions on military personnel and, in particular, their families and how we support them. Because I come from a riding that has a military base, I have a great appreciation for a lot of the services and programs that exist, not just for our men and women who are wearing the uniform, but their families who are supporting them, and the supports that they need. I'm wondering if you can provide us with some information on the positive work or impacts on military families and communities across Canada, particularly as it relates to funding programs and service expansions to support military members and their families.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm glad you raised this, because this is one focus we wanted to bring significant light on. I think we all know that, regardless of what profession that you have, when you know that your family is well looked after, you're going to be able to perform well at work. When you look at the challenges that our Canadian Armed Forces members have, whether it's training or in operations, this point is even more poignant.

In terms of the investment that we're making into the military family resource centres—a hub that caters to the people who are living on base—we've made some significant improvements on that. In fact, I was able to visit the MFRC where they have day care in Winnipeg. I was able to go early on, before some investments were made and, in addition, afterwards. I was happy to see base commanders and the leadership having more flexibility to be able to make the adjustments for the people on the ground. One example that hit me hard was one person said, "It's great that you have day care, but I'm military police. I'm a single mom, and I do night shift." I just turned to the base commander and said that they should have the flexibility to be able to make those decisions, and they have. It's nice to be able to give the resources to people to adjust to their needs.

Our families have to move constantly. We're making some changes to where we can make the moves easier. We're going to make some additional changes. The longer-term changes are going to take about a year, but we've gone ahead and gotten approval. We've hit the 10 biggest dis-satisfiers on relocation. That has a significant impact for folks.

I'm just going to pass it over the vice admiral to be able to talk about some of those changes.

● (0930)

Rear-Admiral D.C. Hawco (Acting Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Thanks, Minister. I would start by building on the minister's point. There are about 12,000 relocations per year in the Canadian Armed Forces. A lot of those are related to people joining. A number of those are related to people who are going on career courses that are of protracted duration. A number of those are rotating positions abroad to NATO and NORAD positions, those operational headquarters, etc. Amongst those 12,000 relocations, we have a consistent evaluation metric in our military personnel command of how it's going, what the costs are. We've noted that there's a modest trend of increase in the overall expenses related to that.

As we've been monitoring, we've recognized very quickly the dissatisfaction with a number of aspects of the current Brookfield BGRS contract: things related to the relocation card, which was widely reported on, and we understood that impact immediately. Within a number of days of getting those kinds of indications, we shifted over to direct fund transfers to individuals. We've augmented the ability of members to get direct access to clerks and staff on the departmental side to address that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's great. Thank you.

I only have a few seconds left, but I did just want to use the opportunity to say that in Kingston, at CFB Kingston in particular, the military resource centre that exists there is a great asset for the community, in terms of its ability to help connect military communities with our non-military community. What we have seen as a massive success is when we can get our military personnel participating and living and engaging in the community, being coaches of basketball teams, being involved. That really not only helps the individual families but also helps the non-military folks really gain a great appreciation for the work that the military is doing, a greater appreciation for how the members contribute to a community. I really hope that, as we move forward, we can continue to focus on strengthening those supports.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Very quickly on that, I was just in Kingston for the RMC convocation, and I saw just that. Before that, I was in Borden where I saw a great connection with the community.

Regardless of which base I go to, when I talk to the base commander or the senior leadership, I always ask what the relationship is with the community. It is absolutely essential to have a good relationship, but more importantly, to see that the integration is extremely important. I usually like to meet with the councillors or the mayors to see what that co-operation is.

It means our military families are going to be better supported with a better relationship. I'm very proud of the work that our leadership is doing on bases.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

The Chair: MP Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): I'd like to thank the minister and department officials for joining us this morning. It's been a very good discussion so far.

Minister, currently we have DND moving forward with the interim fighter capability project and the future fighter capability project. To date, how much has been spent on the interim and the future fighter capability projects?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll pass that over to the officials to talk about exactly what we have in terms of the costs so far.

The projects are actually going quite well. I met with the Australian ambassador just yesterday. I talked about where we're at and thanked them for the work they've done.

First of all, we're progressing very well. We have five companies that are part of the process for replacing the permanent fleet, a replacement of up to 88 aircraft. When it comes to the interim as well, this is not just about purchasing the interim fleet, but how we can make that system even better. We're making sure the right investments are going into place.

I'll give you one example of this. This is a very important point, one that will help to answer your question.

For example, we had a system in place where they had proper helmets that actually modernized the system, but didn't come with the weapons systems. Now we're going to be able to have those weapons systems to make the capability of the F-18 even greater. For example, the AIM-9X missile will drastically improve things. It was great that the investment was made on the advanced helmet, but this is now going to allow us to put even greater systems on, to make the current system far more effective.

● (0935)

Mr. David Yurdiga: Do we have any numbers?

Ms. Jody Thomas: I can answer that. We're pleased to get you the numbers of what has been spent to date. We have with us today the expected expenditures for this fiscal year on the two projects, but we can take that on notice.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Okay. I appreciate that.

What is the estimated cost for the 32-year-old Australian F-18s? This is a big concern because we don't really know what they are going to cost. Do we have any idea what the total cost is to have these planes on Canadian soil?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We don't have the exact cost just yet, as we're still going through—

Mr. David Yurdiga: I assume we have a budget. What is the estimated cost? Can we get an estimated cost? Do we have—

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: One thing is we want to make sure—

Mr. David Yurdiga: So, we don't know.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No, we will know, but we want to make sure we have the right details. Giving you an estimated cost right now would be irresponsible. It's better to make sure that we get you the correct information once we have further details. The team is currently working on that diligently, and once we have those costs, we'll be able to give you a formal distribution on that.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Okay, I understand that. Thank you very much for that. We don't have anything for the committee today.

I'm just wondering when we can expect delivery of the first fighter jets from Australia.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We're looking at spring of next year, 2019.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Do we have any information regarding the status of the planes, what kinds of repairs they require? Do we know which planes we're getting because I understand the Australians haven't decided on which planes we'll have. How can we guarantee that we're getting a plane that is ready for use?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm glad you asked that question. In fact, we're going to have some very detailed information on this because a Canadian company, L3, which works on our planes, set the parameters on how the testing is done for the Australian F-18s. Pat will give you the details of what it's called. This is going to give us very detailed information on what we're getting. Also, we are a Five Eyes partner and we have a tremendous relationship. We're going to make sure that we get the right aircraft for our folks.

Patrick, do you want to elaborate on that?

Mr. Patrick Finn (Assistant Deputy Minister, Materiel, Department of National Defence): Sir, quickly, the tail numbers have not specifically been identified. They will be negotiated for the very reason that you say: that they still have hours on them. We don't want to take aircraft at the very end of their service life. These will be flyable assets that are in service with the Royal Australian Air Force as we see today. In some of the discussions that have commenced, we have not signed the instrument of sale yet, but we're getting the final approvals, the final third party transfer out of the U. S.. We will then discuss with the Australians the rate at which they're transferring aircraft. If it means delaying a few months so we get an aircraft with better hours, we will do that. But we will ensure that the actual aircraft that come into service here are fully capable and fully serviceable.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: [*Inaudible—Editor*] specify the number of days, and we'll be discussing this topic as well.

The Chair: That's your time, I'm sorry.

I'm going to have to yield the floor to MP Vandal. Welcome.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Thank you, Minister.

During the last election campaign and through about two and a half years of governing, our party committed to renewing nation-to-nation relationships with indigenous peoples across Canada. In support of this effort, and to move forward with reconciliation with indigenous communities in Manitoba, I know the Department of National Defence has shown great leadership by the actions they've taken on the divestment of the Kapyong barracks in my hometown of Winnipeg. This is a very important file for Manitobans. It's something that's been lagging for over 15 years, so I want to commend your department for showing that leadership.

Can you, Minister, expand on the role that the Department of National Defence and our government is playing with reconciliations with indigenous people across Canada?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: The ceremony that we attended for the Kapyong barracks—they did it for the land transfer—was quite emotional. You can see the impact there. That was, I think, a direct result of the relationship that our leadership in the Canadian Armed Forces and National Defence have built with the first nations community leaders. That is an example of what we're actually trying to do across Canada by working with first nations communities to make sure that the communication there is back and forth, including even at my level. I had a conversation with Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde just yesterday where I set up a meeting for a certain issue. Having that collaboration is where we build that trust. We've made significant efforts along the way when it comes to certain cleanups of certain sites. But out of this, we're trying to demonstrate it's not just the action, it's about how we're doing it. That level of relationship that is being built is demonstrating, through National Defence, what our government's commitments are, and more importantly, what is expected by Canadians.

It's heartening when you speak with people about the stories they're telling about the tremendous work that the Canadian Armed Forces' members are doing, especially when it came to the forest fires last year, when many first nations communities were impacted. The Canadian Armed Forces' members worked very closely together to not only help them, but also more importantly, to ask for the tremendous knowledge that the first nations communities actually have of their own land and how to deal with the forest fires.

● (0940)

Mr. Dan Vandal: MP Gerretsen will take the next question.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

Minister, I know there's been a further increase in capital funding related to "Strong, Secure, Engaged" investments in major capital projects, such as the fixed-wing search and rescue, Canadian surface combatant, and light armoured vehicle upgrade, as major factors contributing to the net increase in authorities.

Can you elaborate as to how these investments will enhance the security of our men and women in uniform when they're deployed overseas?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Absolutely.

With the projects, if you look at the upgrade of our armoured vehicles, this now allows us to go to the full complement of upgrading our LAV 6. Our LAV 6 were being upgraded before, but not to the full quantity that we needed. By now getting to the full complement that the army had requested, it allows far greater flexibility for our leadership for what's needed in Canada, but also for further deployments, for example, the battle group we have currently in Latvia and our contributions we're making towards that.

On the fixed-wing search and rescue, this is one capability, in talking to some of the SAR techs in Comox, where we're going to have the centre of excellence, the training centre there, that is going to modernize how we do search and rescue. We're literally bringing the technology into this. Rather than just looking from binos, we're looking at how we can identify, from people to ships to aircraft, with sensors and being able to fine-tune, and getting the SAR techs, the people who are going to do the equipment....

As much as we're looking at the investment, this is the capability we were talking about in SSE. We didn't want to have just a laundry list of things that we're buying: what capabilities are we improving?

As you know, search and rescue is done across Canada, and this capability, in my opinion, is literally going to revolutionize search and rescue in Canada.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: MP Deltell, welcome. The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure and honour to meet you today.

[*English*]

First of all, Minister, I think this is the first time I have had the chance to have an exchange with you. I'm very pleased for that.

As a Canadian, I want to thank you for what you have done for our country when you served in our army. You served well; you defended yourself well. You defended our country and the values of our country very well. Thank you so much, Lieutenant-Colonel, for what you have done.

[*Translation*]

When the government was elected two and a half years ago, we saw a major change in rhetoric, in words. A lot of emphasis was placed on those who have brought great honour to Canada in the last half-century. They are the peacekeepers, the people who go to serve with the blue helmets.

We have heard a lot about it, but the reality has sometimes been different.

Under our government, generally speaking, some 300 peacekeepers were deployed each year. Now there are barely 46 of them, and, a short time ago, there were no more than 22.

Mr. Minister, why so much rhetoric about peacekeepers, while in reality, there are fewer today than there were three years ago?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I want to thank you very much for your kind words.

To begin, and all of you know, it's very important, I think for all of us—and I appreciate how we all have viewpoints when it comes to defence—that we turn to our people who serve. All parliamentarians are looking at their best interest, but through different viewpoints. That, I sincerely appreciate.

When it comes to the peacekeeping or peace operation, whatever we want to call it, this is not about the numbers anymore. As an example, this is about understanding what contributions we can make that can have a substantial impact. What we have now announced, and what we're willing to do, is making sure that what we provide is going to enhance the various operations.

For example, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, we've been there for 18 years. At the end of the day, we do not want to just look at the numbers of people. Whether we send one person or 600, it's what contribution are they going to make, and are they going to be able to have that impact. I also want to make sure we take the time to make sure that whatever contribution we're going to make, it's going to have that impact. With that result, even if it takes a little longer, the impact might be greater.

We have taken that time. We know, for example, the contributions we're going to make in Mali for that one smart pledge will have an impact. When we decide where we're going to send the quick reaction force, we'll make certain it's going to have a direct impact. The numbers may fluctuate, but we're trying to do peacekeeping differently.

We have to look at the challenges that the UN has had to face. I'll give you an example. Troop-contributing nations have not come well trained. We're trying to address this with the potential capacity building that we will also do. This is about making sure, in a very complex environment—not just the realities on the ground, but also in a complex system within the United Nations—that any contributions we make will have an impact.

● (0945)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: We all recognize that and we recognize it's not an easy thing to address. When you talk so much about peacekeeping, the reality is that it's not only about the numbers, it's about the fact of what has been done in the last two and a half years. It's not as you said and as your government expected so much in the rhetoric three years ago.

[*Translation*]

The minister has just been talking about Mali. That affects us directly in Quebec, particularly in my constituency. Unlike my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, I do not have the privilege of representing CFB Valcartier, but it is literally right next to my constituency.

As the minister knows, as all Canadians know, 430 Squadron from Valcartier will be deployed to Mali in the coming months. The squadron from Edmonton will go first, and then the one from Valcartier. These are people I know. I met some of them last weekend.

Mr. Minister, can you tell us whether they will be deployed to act as peacekeepers or to mount attacks against terrorists?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: When it comes to the conflict itself, we have to look at the reality on the ground. Various factions have signed on to agreement. We also know that the realities of peacekeeping have changed, and I've been very clear with Canadians and with all of you on this. This is not the peacekeeping of the past. It is with the intermix of radical groups, and everything from organized crime to governments themselves not being fully up to speed are part of the problem. We need to be able to make sure that we look at the realities of it, so when it comes to what we're sending, right now we're sending a capability for a mission that is sending helicopters for medical and transport support.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You're talking about the new reality of the peacekeeping, but can we talk anymore about peacekeeping? We're talking about fighters. They will have to fight. They will have to react. They will have to respond to attacks on them. Are we talking about peacekeeping anymore?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: This is about what the reality on the ground is. This is not about looking at, for example, whether we start addressing it by certain names. Whether it's peacekeeping or what we talk about in terms of what we're doing in Iraq, that is a conversation that leads to, in my opinion, having radical conversations. We need to look at what the reality is on the ground, and that's what we need to discuss. Yes, those conflicts are pretty complex and are dangerous.

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold it there. I let you run over a bit just to even out the time, but your time is up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Really, Mr. Minister, this is not a matter of—

[*English*]

The Chair: That means I'm going to have to yield the floor to another MP. Sorry about that.

MP Khalid, welcome. The floor is yours.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister and staff for all your hard work on this very important file.

I want to touch on gender balance within our Canadian Armed Forces. You touched on the Deschamps report as well, and I understand that it is a departmental goal to increase representation of women by 1% per year for the next 10 years. Can you explain how that will happen? What are the challenges you currently face in having more gender representation, and how are you going to overcome those challenges?

● (0950)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We are committed to making sure that we, first of all, create an environment in the Canadian Forces that's inclusive of all. When it comes to gender, the 1% increase is a way to start creating goals and targets that the military can work towards as set out by the chief of the defence staff. Even though it states 1% up to 25%, that is not an end goal. That is the start of the momentum, because the end goal is to represent the population that we serve and gender parity is the goal.

From that we also realize that we do have a tremendous amount of work to do. I'm extremely proud of the work that the leadership in the Canadian Armed Forces has done to address the horrific problems that were created for our members, and Operation Honour is doing just that. I would like to move faster on this, as would our leadership, but one thing I can assure you and all the members here is that no stone is being left unturned. We're putting the right investments in; we're making changes to policies; we're making sure that the military police have the right tools to be able to investigate. We're making changes to our military justice system so it can be more responsive, and at the same time, sending a very clear message in the Canadian Armed Forces that anything but zero tolerance is not going to be acceptable. We're demonstrating this.

We do have a lot more work to do. We will continue to adjust. As we recruit more people, we will give them the confidence that not only are they going to be looked after, but they're going to be able to excel. We're going to change the policies within the Canadian Armed Forces to make it far more inclusive, from their uniforms to their personal equipment. We will change some of the policies so that having a family will not be a hindrance to your career. Those are some of the things.

Are there certain numbers that you want to pass on there, please?

RAdm D.C. Hawco: I would build on your point from earlier, Minister, that retention is an extremely important part. We are very happy to see the challenges associated with attrition go down. We saw a drop from 7.9% to 7.5%, aiming towards getting to 7%.

As the minister also indicated, we have taken a number of steps to facilitate and enable the prioritization of files in recruiting centres. The women in force initiative allows for ladies to understand the uniqueness of service in the military before signing on. We had roughly 60 or so participate in that program, and about half immediately moved to enrolment.

We're taking a lot of innovative approaches to try to increase the awareness. We're very proud of the fact that we're one of the few, and first, militaries in the world that has no barriers to service by gender in any of our occupations in the military. It's an important challenge that we're grabbing to put that message out.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

I think this is a great leadership approach that you have taken in ensuring gender balance within the Canadian Armed Forces.

I want to move to a different issue that, I think, Canadians are very worried about: cybersecurity. I understand that in budget 2018 there was some money set aside for creating a centre to target cybersecurity, and to make sure that we're leaders on that front, as well.

In the main estimates, we see that there's an increase in funding for the Communications Security Establishment. Is there a link between our work on cybersecurity and this funding in the main estimates for the Communications Security Establishment?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Absolutely. As I mentioned earlier, cybersecurity is something that we as a government are making a much greater focus. I'm going to have our acting chief talk a little bit more about this.

Canadians can be extremely proud of the work that has been done. We need to make sure that we put the right investments in the right place so that the tremendous brain power in our people is going to be better utilized, to make sure that we have the right research and development and create the right institutions so that we can work better together. Bill C-59 will also give us the legislative tools so that we can use those capabilities. Also, finally, CSE will be able to support the Canadian Armed Forces even better. There was an issue in the past that did not allow for this.

Shelly, do you want to just add to that?

● (0955)

The Chair: I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to move on to the last formal question.

I'm going to yield the floor to MP Garrison.

The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to turn to an issue of concern generally, and that is the increased nuclear tensions around the world.

Whether it's with regard to the United States and North Korea, or to Russia's deployments in eastern Europe, we've had a lot of discussion of tactical nuclear weapons, giving us the whole idea that they're small, that they're only as big as what happened in Hiroshima. We've had some movements on U.S. nuclear doctrine that imply that first-use would occur earlier.

My question is about Canada's role in NATO. One of NATO's goals is to create a world that is free of nuclear weapons. I would like to know what initiatives Canada is taking at NATO in the areas of nuclear disarmament. Is that under your direction or the direction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs? We have a NATO ambassador there. We also have senior military members assigned to NATO. Who's in charge of the nuclear disarmament file? What initiatives have we actually taken?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: There is a NATO piece, and there's a much wider piece, as well.

NATO is not strictly about the defence ministers. There are also foreign ministers meetings, which lead up to all of us doing our work together. Every two years, we have a leaders' summit, and the leaders' summit is coming up in July. Global Affairs does have the lead when it comes to this.

However, this is where we do work very closely together. One example that was demonstrated extremely well was Minister Freeland's leadership with the United States, hosting foreign affairs ministers in Vancouver, when it comes to North Korea. We took a very strong stand on making sure we're going to support the sanctions and keep the pressure in place. More importantly, we stressed very clearly that this is a diplomatic thing to resolve. Through that work, we can be proud to say that Canada has contributed to some of the work that is being done currently, that you hear about in the news.

We are absolutely committed to making sure that we have the right rules, regulations, and treaties in place, and that they're also enforced, when it comes to nuclear weapons. We can't, obviously, have a repeat. There are no winners when it comes to a nuclear weapon, whether it's a small or big nuclear weapon. At the end of the day, a nuclear weapon is catastrophic for all of us.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In terms of the NATO committee on disarmament that would deal with nuclear issues, who is sitting on that committee? There's supposed to be one, but it doesn't seem to be very active. Is that senior military officials, or is that from the Global Affairs side?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: No. Foreign affairs ministers also have their discussions, and our own ambassador does work. We as defence ministers do have discussions on this, as well, as we look at how to get NATO...making sure that we can keep tensions low and de-escalate situations. The work that we're doing, especially the message that we're trying to send to Russia, in addition to sending a very clear and strong deterrence message, is a message of unity, that the strength of NATO collectively is not one to be challenged.

At the same time, we want to have constructive dialogue so nations like Russia can get back into rules-based order. However, we also need to take a look at other nations that are directly or indirectly supporting the Russian military intelligence structure. We will always work with our allies in trying to reduce tensions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister, for coming today to discuss main estimates. I want to echo MP Deltell's comments earlier and thank you for your many years of distinguished service to Canada.

I'm going to suspend, let you depart, and then we can talk to the officials.

Did you want to say something before we go?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I just want to thank the committee. I have noticed when I've travelled that wherever you have gone, you really have demonstrated a team Canada atmosphere, and it's been noticed. I really do appreciate that. You see members from all parties going and looking at trying to improve our defence. That message of unity that you have sent has been noticed. I want to thank you for that.

We might have differences of opinion in the House, but every time you've travelled, you have sent a message of unity, and I really appreciate it. It makes my job a lot easier. I just wanted to thank you for your tremendous work.

● (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to suspend.

● (1000)

(Pause)

● (1000)

The Chair: Before we resume with questions, as the committee knows, tomorrow night we'll be meeting with the U.K. Minister for Defence Procurement, and I think Mr. Spengemann wants to move a motion so we can facilitate that meeting.

Mr. Spengemann, go ahead.

● (1005)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I'd like to bring the following motion:

> That the Committee approve the hospitality expenses for a dinner on Wednesday, May 30, 2018 in honour of Guto Bebb, Minister for Defence Procurement, Parliament of United Kingdom.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Randall.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Again, late notice means I'm not available for this, so I will do my best to find a substitute, but I'll support the motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Is there any other discussion?

Mr. James Bezan: It's the same for me, short notice, but I'm going out of the way to make sure I have lunch with him at another time.

I approve it.

The Chair: If there's no more discussion, we'll have a vote.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Let's get back to some questioning. We're going to run through the format we had before in terms of timing, so I'm going to yield the floor to Mrs. Romanado. You have the floor for seven minutes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): I'd like to thank the members here today for, first of all, your service, for those who are serving and have served, and for being here today.

I wanted to talk a bit about something that's near and dear to me, obviously. In terms of the recruitment of a Canadian Armed Forces member, throughout their career in the military, and then post-career, as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, my concern is always to make sure that from the time we recruit you to the time that you're no longer with us, your experience with the Canadian Armed Forces and your service are recognized.

Pease elaborate on some of the work that's being done in conjunction with DND and Veterans Affairs Canada to make sure that our brave men and women in uniform and the families who support them are being supported throughout that career.

Ms. Jody Thomas: I'll begin, and then I'll ask Admiral Hawco to continue.

The Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, and Veterans Affairs Canada are working very closely together to ensure that from enrolment to post-retirement—because of injury or illness or at the end of a long career—the individual soldier, sailor, or air person, and his or her family are taken care of and have access to services and support. That transition from military to civilian life can be traumatic for some people because they have been in uniform and surrounded by the Canadian Armed Forces since the age of 17.

In one initiative, the suicide prevention strategy, we're working jointly with Veterans Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence, and the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure that no matter where you are in your career, there's a continuation of mental health care.

The next initiative we've been working on is what we're calling "convergence", which is not bringing the two departments together physically but ensuring seamless access to service, pensions, support, and medical care from the eyes of the veteran. It doesn't mean combining everything into one. It means you have been injured on duty or not on duty. You need access to veterans' services. You fill out one form. You have one client experience. In the background we make sure that everything is taken care of.

One of the things we hear most is that the veteran experience is confusing, complicating, and frustrating. Convergence between the two departments is hopefully a client service experience for the veterans where they don't care where the money or support is coming from; they're just getting it. We hope to be able to talk about that more in the near future.

I'll ask Admiral Hawco to talk about "the journey", as the CDS calls it, which is the experience of somebody who enrolls in the armed forces.

RAdm D.C. Hawco: Thank you, Deputy.

I guess it's not a surprise, particularly for this table, that the "Strong, Secure, Engaged" focus on people from the Prime Minister and the minister is animating, informing, and shaping our approach.

The deputy referred to "the journey". That's a broader expression of those transition points that the deputy spoke to in the context of someone who is moving toward retirement. Think about postings. Think about someone who is ill but they're going to return to work, because that's the objective. You talk about the career courses, and all those areas have policy points, so investment of a policy division and increasing the capability there, understanding that we have about 37 primary care clinics across the CAF, 31 of which have dedicated mental health practitioners.

As we move the ill and injured, we recognize they need to have dedicated and specific focused care. That's the establishment of joint personnel support units, that concept of providing dedicated oversight with a proper career case management number so you can get personalized care, awareness of individuals, and the specifics of the files. It's recognizing the $198 million over the course of the government's investment in total health and wellness.

When we think of this as long-standing tracking or suicide prevention, and understanding the factors and the causalities that lead to people making desperate choices at times, we have for many years now been tracking suicide rates and understanding and featuring that in our approach to mental health.

Of course, we have also seen an increase in the number of mental health positions, approximately 455 across those 37 clinics, within 31 that have dedicated mental health professionals.

It's also important that in our civilian system 4,000 mental health care providers have registered to provide care to military members in their own practices. That's a great enabler for an individual to get timely access and a variety of access, because sometimes geography doesn't naturally lend itself or make it easy for a person to access care, because of a posting to a recruiting centre in a town that's not immediately proximate to a major base, as an example.

● (1010)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: One of my colleagues, Mr. Gerretsen, brought up something that's near and dear to me—military families. I am one, myself, as the mother of two serving members. I had the great pleasure of visiting 12 bases and wings over the past year and talking to a lot of military family members.

One thing that struck me is the supports for families after service. I know that we recently announced increased funding to MFRCs through "Strong, Secure, Engaged" of an additional $6 million, but we also announced last year that going forward, all 32 MFRCs across Canada will now have access to veteran families who are medically released. From now on, veteran families can continue to go to their local MFRCs, an initiative of $147 million over the next six years, with additional funding of $15 million going forward to support veteran families to continue to use these services.

As a military family member, as you said, the transition can sometimes be traumatic for the member, but it can also be traumatic for the families who have always known that support centre of the MFRC.

Could you elaborate on the importance of supporting families in the Canadian Armed Forces? I know "Strong, Secure, Engaged" was the first time we've seen military families showcased and recognized so prominently. Could you talk a little bit about that?

The Chair: I'm going to have to put that on hold. That was a lengthy question. We might have time to circle back on that, but I'm going to have to yield the floor to MP Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and again, I'm glad to be able to ask questions.

I want to welcome Rear-Admiral Hawco to the firing line. I know you've been on the job as vice-chief for not even 24 hours, so it's good to see you here. We're looking forward to seeing you here many times, as we go forward.

I want to get down to last year's budget. From what was promised to what was actually spent, it was about $2 billion short of what was in the departmental plan, what was able to go forward. The minister talked a bit about that in his opening comments. We see what's in the estimates today. We see what the departmental plan was for national defence down the road. In 2021, there's a $4-billion shortfall that is different than what is in "Strong, Secure, Engaged". If the defence policy is saying one thing and departmental plans are saying something completely different, which document is correct?

Ms. Jody Thomas: The defence budget is, of course, a subject of great interest and discussion.

I'm going to ask both the CFO and the ADM, Mat to weigh in on this, so we are going to take a bit of time on this question.

Mr. James Bezan: Don't take up all my time. I only have seven minutes.

Ms. Jody Thomas: "Strong, Secure, Engaged" did lay out a spending plan. When we dove into each project, we realized that some of the spending plans may not be completely aligned with "Strong, Secure, Engaged". What we are trying to do is preserve space and funding for the projects going forward. Therefore, we are only bringing into the main estimates the money we know we need. We'll use supplementaries (A) and (B) to bring in more if projects advance or if we require more money.

We are also looking really hard at why money isn't spent, and the minister outlined some of that. Ten per cent of why we did not bring in some of the $2 billion last year was that we were more effective and more efficient. We spent less money on a project that was finished—

● (1015)

Mr. James Bezan: I'm glad to hear that.

Ms. Jody Thomas: It's good news. We don't really talk about that good news very often.

Mr. James Bezan: What of the other 90%?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Of the other 90%, 25% of it was set aside for intellectual property. That money wasn't required because we didn't have to spend it to buy intellectual property in that year. It's still there and available. We may never need it, but we always have it fenced and available.

Some of it, as we said, is that industry was not quite ready. Industry couldn't deliver—

Mr. James Bezan: That's where the real problem is. If we're falling behind on the procurement, on the capital expenditures.... We were $2 billion short last year. In 2021, based upon the departmental plan itself, it's looking like it's going to be $4 billion short.

David Perry analyzed the numbers and looked at it. I know that there's an announcement coming out in the next day or two from the minister about how we actually resource this, but just to catch up from what was originally in SSE to where we need to go and re-equip our Canadian Armed Forces is going to require an increase of 315% in capital expenditures. That's spending that we haven't seen since the Korean War. A lot of people are saying that procurement is broken. How can you spend the money in that volume, when already, through our short two and a half years of Liberal government, they are showing that they lapse funding every year?

Ms. Jody Thomas: I'm going to ask the CFO and the ADM Materiel to answer so I don't take up time.

Mr. Patrick Finn: Very quickly, sir, knowing what your time is, I think there are a few projects there that are massive. We have seen this in the past when we built the Canadian patrol frigates. We're about to enter an era where we're starting to build the Canadian surface combatants, as we talked about here, which is a project of $56 billion to $60 billion, and again, there are the fighters, which are the better part of another $20 billion.

What is going to happen in a few years as we enter implementation on a number of very large projects, without investing a lot more people, is that our spend will ramp up quite significantly. The deputy talked about, in this past year, the $2 billion in intellectual property, and the non-performance of vendors around equipment, which they stepped forward and addressed and now is in delivery: our standard military pattern vehicles, our recce versions of the LAVs. We're not going to accept equipment into the military that's not fully combat-capable and ready and have people deployed with it. We make that point to industry, and they step up, sir.

Mr. James Bezan: Admiral Finn, if you start looking the replacement of our CF-18s, we're going with this interim purchase, which is roughly estimated at $500 million, to buy 18 rusted-out Australian jets that have been flown hard and fast and over the ocean. They're replacing theirs with brand new F-35s. They're not going to give us their best used aircraft at the beginning of this process until they have all their new fleet in service.

Mr. Patrick Finn: Sir, they, like us, have put a lot of investment into those aircraft. I sailed on 40-year-old ships that had brand new modern missiles. I think we have to be careful about the age of an aircraft and saying that reflects its capability. They haven't—

Mr. James Bezan: But I think on average these aircraft have more hours than our own Hornets.

Mr. Patrick Finn: They have in a number of cases more than ours, but hours in a fighter are not necessarily the best measure of the stress on the structure. How much has been low-flying? How much was combat air support? We're quite comfortable, as the minister said, with the work done at L3 in Montreal to actually compare the two.

They're quite capable. They will be in transition. I think we have a good dialogue going. It is an interim capability. We do want to have the request for proposal on the street for the replacement of our fighters next spring, sir, such that we're moving out in the replacement.

Mr. James Bezan: I want to change gears here a bit. I'll come back to you, Admiral Finn, as the ADM on materiel and defence equipment. We have a situation where we're looking at production gaps both at Seaspan and at Irving. Where are we at in how we fill those gaps between the AOPS finishing off and when we go to CSC? Also, what the heck is happening out in Vancouver on where we're at with the joint supply ships?

Mr. Patrick Finn: On the east coast, we're in discussion with the yard. It's not the government's to entirely solve...but we are looking at the six AOPS from a military requirement capability. On some of the other things, as we move to the selection of the surface combatant design this fall, that will really tell us what we call the "right-hand edge of the gap". Do we have a mature enough design that we can move out quicker and close it further?

On the east coast, because there are two large runs of ships, it's a bit less of an issue. On the west coast, a lot of the detail on the Coast Guard projects I can't speak to, but in the context of the joint support ship, we are in discussion now about commencing construction very shortly to move out on construction, advancing potentially some of that work.

● (1020)

Mr. James Bezan: This is just components. We're only talking about building some blocks and then delaying the actual final assembly until after they get caught up on Coast Guard vessels.

The Chair: I'm going to have to leave it there. However, you might get a question on this from MP Garrison, because he has some activity happening out in his neck of the woods.

MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd be happy to hear what Mr. Finn was just about to say on the question of gaps on the west coast.

Mr. Patrick Finn: Thank you, sir.

What we're trying to do is take a more programmed approach, as opposed to a bunch of stovepipe projects where we start one, we finish one, what do we do...? It's why we're in discussion with Seaspan, the Vancouver shipyard, about what's in the art of the possible.

When we talk about some blocks of the ship, this is a rather large ship. We've acquired a mature design, the German Berlin-class design. Basically, the entire forward part of the ship is untouched for the design that we acquired; therefore, it's very mature. We are in negotiations now and hope to announce soon the ability to move out and actually advance that work. It's a substantial part of the ship.

The kinds of blocks we're talking about combined would be much greater than the ships that are being built today out there. To be able to actually move that work around to make sure that we load-level the work in the shipyard.... For any production facility, that is always one of the big points for success, actually: to try to make sure you maintain that workforce and they continue to be employed. That is what we have under way, sir.

Mr. Randall Garrison: That sounds like very good news. I do have the twin concerns of maintaining employment and of not losing the expertise of people because of gaps in the employment, so thank you very much for that answer.

I'm really pleased that we have the judge advocate general with us today. I'd like to turn my questions now to the military justice system. Bill C-15 passed in the previous Parliament, and there were great delays in proclaiming sections of that act and getting on with the reform to the military justice system. I know you've been in the job just under a year, so I'm not going to ask you if you've finished everything, but I'd like an update on where we are, because I understand that most of the remaining sections of Bill C-15 will be proclaimed very soon, and my understanding is that those reforms should get under way September 1. Can you give us an update on those reforms?

Commodore Geneviève Bernatchez (Judge Advocate General, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): I'm pleased to confirm that the regulations that were related to the coming into force of Bill C-15 have now been completed and approved. We will see these sections and regulations coming into force on September 1, 2018.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Is the system really prepared in terms of the training that was necessary and getting information out to people in the military about the changes? I think what we're really trying to address here is confidence in the military justice system. People have to know about these changes and how they'll affect them for them to be effective.

Cmdre Geneviève Bernatchez: Thank you for your comment about the confidence in the military justice system and its legitimacy. You know how important it is to me and how hard I've been working over the past several months to ensure that more information was given to the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian public about that system.

The downside of having regulations that take a while to get drafted is that it takes a while to get them approved and for changes to come about. The advantage of that is that it's given us the time to look at training and at the implementation of the changes that would be provided for under the regulations. We've been actively working over the last several months developing the training packages that will be required to bring up to speed Canadian Armed Forces decision-makers and those who apply the military justice system and train them in the new changes.

The training will be available by mid-June, so that when the regulations come into force on September 1, those who are qualified to perform actions in the military justice system have the required knowledge and training.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Do you feel you've received adequate resources to implement all these reforms as of September 1, or are there still things that will be held back that you will be unable to do?

● (1025)

Cmdre Geneviève Bernatchez: I always like to say that there are never enough lawyers, because, of course, legal issues are becoming more and more prevalent in all departments and Canadian society at large. Right now I'm satisfied with the resourcing I have.

With the new tracking systems I will put in place in the next several months, I'll be able to identify whether there are gaps and then make evidence-based analysis and come back to the department, to the deputy, to the chief of the defence staff, if I do need more resources, but at this time I evaluate that I have enough resources to answer the bill.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I have to say this is something I've followed since I was elected to Parliament, and finally, we're making some progress, so my congratulations to you on the progress that we are making in this area.

Two things were left out of Bill C-15 and are now before Parliament in Bill C-77 , and those were provisions with regard to victims in the military justice system and also the provisions with regard to the treatment of aboriginal offenders within the military justice system. My question is really about whether the delays in getting this legislation into force will impair the new reforms. In other words, I'm feeling things would be better if these were implemented at the same time. We have a lot of changes taking place without the victims' rights part and without the aboriginal offender part.

Do you have any comment on that? Would that require further adjustments and further training?

Cmdre Geneviève Bernatchez: There is great news in the fact that on May 10, Bill C-77 was tabled in Parliament, and we'll have to let it follow its parliamentary process in order for it to be approved and come into force. I'm also pleased to say that, while this is occurring, we are not immobile, and we're not looking at this as unfolding work. We're taking concrete action to implement as many rights as possible for victims within the military justice system and to ensure that indigenous sentencing considerations are made by courts even as the act follows its course.

In fact, what the legislation will do in many respects is to enshrine into legislation those rights and those considerations that are already, in large part, being provided for by policy directions that have been given either by the director of military prosecutions or by our service tribunals.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I know it's kind of a truism that opposition members aren't always happy at estimates discussions, but this is making me very happy. Again, I congratulate you on the initiatives that you've taken and give you the assurance that New Democrats have agreed that we will expedite Bill C-77 in any way possible in order to support the work you're already doing.

The Chair: The last seven-minute question will go to MP Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

My first question is to Admiral Finn.

I would like to take the opportunity to take us back to the discussion one more time on the Australian F-18 fighter jets. I want to put to you the rather unfortunate characterization of these aircraft by members of the opposition. The fact that these are aircraft have been flown before should in itself in no way denigrate our capability that will be created through the acquisition.

Canadians don't necessarily understand the way inspection cycles work and airframe fatigue works. When I served with the United Nations in Iraq, we routinely availed ourselves of airframes of the C-130s that were manufactured in the 1960s. In speaking with aircrew and mechanics, I learned that the central components are engines, engine maintenance, potential upgrades, avionics upgrades, and making sure that the main spars are within their fatigue lifespan. Could you inform the committee in a bit more detail what's involved? I'm quite happy to hear that we haven't negotiated individual tail numbers yet. What are expectations of the residual lifetime of these airframes? What are they going to be used for? Are the women and men who are going to fly them going to be safe?

Mr. Patrick Finn: In this particular circumstance, as you indicate, we've had other fleets of C-130 aircraft, the ECHO series, that we retired in recent years that had been built in the 1960s. What is very fortunate in this case is that we have been co-operating with our Australian colleagues for decades on understanding the fatigue life and how what we call the legacy Hornet, the CF-18, operates, where it takes fatigue, and how it operates at high altitude and at low altitude. We have literally taken new aircraft and tested them to destruction. We literally set up test beds and did that, so we had absolute understanding of how that aircraft operates. It was done as a combined test effort. A lot of the data was done here in Canada, in Montreal.

As a result, our knowledge of the structures is world-leading. In fact, the U.S. military sends aircraft to Mirabel to be repaired, as a result of our knowledge. As a result of it, the Australians gave us access to all the data of each of the aircraft. We know exactly what shape they're in.

We have actually expanded that further and we have discrete inspection points where we actually put the aircraft through a very detailed maintenance process, strip it down and look at it. Our experience with our own aircraft has been that there is less fatigue than expected, but nevertheless we've been doing that. They have followed a similar process. As we look at these aircraft from a structural perspective, we're very confident that what we have will be safe for anybody who flies in them. For us, that is job one.

That is part of my role, to ensure that the director of technical air worthiness works for me for all the aircraft, and also that it is capable of the mission and combat-capable. There are things we will do to the aircraft for configuration purposes—for example, in ejection seats and those sorts of things—just so that we're not supporting two different variants.

These 18 aircraft, plus a number of spares, will roll in and become part of our fleet. At some point they'll probably be indistinguishable from our existing aircraft. They will go through periodic updates to ensure that they continue to be safe and operationally capable.

You realize we're moving on to the next fleet, but this is a combat aircraft that needs to be combat-capable at all times, so we have some other initiatives we are looking at—weapon sensors, communications—not just for these aircraft but for all of them. We appreciate that the last of these could be operating to 2032 and must continue to be combat-capable.

● (1030)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much. That's very helpful testimony.

My second question is to Ms. Thomas.

My colleague Ms. Khalid asked the question about gender equality in the Canadian Forces. I would laud the work that's being done to make sure women are not just welcome but equal to men with respect to not just employment in the Canadian Forces but actually serving in the Canadian Forces.

I want to ask you about transgender Canadians, Canadians whose gender identification is not binary. What have you done so far and what might still need to be done to make sure we're fully inclusive across the gender spectrum with respect to the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Jody Thomas: The government and the Department of Defence, Canadian Armed Forces, are fully committed to building a defence team that reflects all Canadians and is open and inclusive. In our defence policy, we announced a number of initiatives to fully leverage diversity. We're looking at enhanced training, recruitment, and retention. There are members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are transgender and their employment has not been impacted or affected. They are welcomed into the Canadian Armed Forces. As Admiral Hawco said, we are the only armed forces in the world where every trade and job occupation is open to anyone who chooses to take on the job. There is zero discrimination in terms of opportunity. Ships are retrofitted so that they are open and inclusive and any gender can use them regardless of where you identify. At bases, and it's the same in office buildings, wherever possible, we're ensuring that they can be inclusive.

I think that the Canadian Armed Forces are a reflection of society and we're learning as we go. However, the medical branch of the Canadian Armed Forces and the senior leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces are certainly seized with this issue in ensuring that discrimination does not occur and when it does occur that they react immediately and respond to it.

Admiral Hawco.

RAdm D.C. Hawco: What I would add, just to put a personal face to it, is when I was fleet commander in 2011 there was an individual in one of our ships. He was going through a gender reassignment to she. The deputy referred to configuration inside the ship; we're talking about living quarters. How did we approach that? We approached that by speaking to each of the individuals who was also sharing the mess deck as she moved into the female mess deck. How do you feel about that? We talked about where you would want to use what shower facilities. We particularized and personalized so that people understood. We asked the individuals to please speak to your spouses. Make sure your spouses or partners understand how they feel about that. Have that dialogue at home. We had regular discussions.

I did not meet with the individual because there could be a bit of stress when a senior person comes and talks to you. We wanted to make sure that this person identified and had a person assisting them so they could understand and vocalize any concerns they might have.

I would wrap up by saying that we talk about the culture in the military and we talk about the traditions and the challenges of evolving it. In a five-year span everyone has been promoted once and posted twice. Your frame of reference completely changes and the ability to evolve the culture in the Canadian Armed Forces is fluid.

● (1035)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

The Chair: I'm going to give the floor to MP Robillard.

If you want to share your time you're free to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The 2018-19 departmental plan states that the Department of National Defence will "implement the Defence Energy and Environmental Strategy, DEES, which outlines initiatives led by the Department of National Defence in support of Canada's commitments in greenhouse gas reductions, and obligations for protection and stewardship of the environment".

What specific measures does the Department of National Defence intend to implement in 2018-19 with respect to environmental protection and the environmental sustainability of military bases?

[*English*]

Ms. Jody Thomas: I'll start and then I'll ask our ADM of Infrastructure, Elizabeth Van Allen, to respond.

It is no surprise with the footprint that the Department of National Defence has that we are one of the larger emitters of greenhouse gas. We are taking a very aggressive approach to reduce our footprint wherever possible. We're investing $226 million in a wide range of infrastructure to reduce our carbon footprint by modernizing infrastructure and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We're transitioning 20% of non-military light-duty vehicle fleets to hybrid and electric by 2020, which is a significant improvement. All new construction and major recapitalizations have to meet the leadership, energy, and environmental design standards or equivalent. Much of our infrastructure is very old. This is a major recapitalization and it's going to take some time but we're working hard at it.

Elizabeth can respond to any specific projects.

Ms. Elizabeth Van Allen (Assistant Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Environment, Department of National Defence): In terms of the projects that we have, there is $63.2 million for a range of different infrastructure projects that will include things like new energy performance contracts at CFB Petawawa, for example, and the clean energy pilot with RidgeBlade at CFB Trenton. We're partnering with the National Research Council to launch a smart buildings pilot across a number of bases in military housing life-cycle upgrades. These are just some of the examples of projects where we're committing to greening.

The Chair: You can share your time with whomever you like. It's up to you. You have about two minutes for a question and a response and then I'll have to give it over to the other side.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you.

My thanks to the witnesses for being here.

A link has been established with the business community, which will also result in the army's needs being met. This is the IDEaS program. DND's first objective is to make sure that all our people have the equipment they need. For the business community, this program is also a unique opportunity to create goods and services for the future.

Can you tell us about the program?

[*English*]

Ms. Jody Thomas: I'm very happy to speak about that program. IDEaS is one of the initiatives out of SSE that we are the most proud of. We are taking the way we solve problems and, in some cases, how we do procurement and work with the academic environment and businesses to change it completely.

Rather than competing for solutions to "we need new boots for the army", we are competing the problem, "our boots get too wet". I'm being very simplistic. I understand that, but that's what we're doing. We're going out and saying that we have a problem. We don't know how to solve it. What are your solutions? We're inviting people to compete.

In some cases, that competition may end up in a procurement, depending on how it goes and what we find out. We're using it for procurement. We're also using it for research into personnel. We're using it for artificial intelligence. It is modernizing how we do the business of defence significantly and it is engaging Canadians, Canadian industry, and academia in solving problems for the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1040)

The Chair: That's all the time you're going to have.

I'm going to yield the last question to MP Yurdiga. You have about three minutes.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you. I'll be sharing my time with MP Deltell.

Currently, we have a significant fighter jet pilot shortage. Even if we acquired the Australian fighter jets, do we even have pilots to fly them? What is DND's strategy to attract more individuals to the fighter jet pilot program?

RAdm D.C. Hawco: You're quite right that there is a requirement to have trained pilots able to manage the fleet, to be able to operate, to be able to do planning, and be part of target package work in CAOC, command and operational centres, both in Winnipeg and deployed.

You're also making the point that, in industry, as we see the demographics of individuals who work for airlines and whatnot being available for flight, we're seeing a pull on.... This is actually not the first time that this has happened. We recognize that attracting pilots is not really the problem, since we are always able to bring in a very large cohort. It's running through a selection process to identify those people that have the aptitudes, the skills, and the medical capabilities to do that.

We know in our approach to pilot training from a fighter lead-in training point of view and from a fighter air crew training point of view.... We have two substantive programmatic service contracts that are going to be evolving, coming in the latter part of this decade and the beginning part of the next decade, that will tailor and allow for changes to throughput for pilots that will allow us to adapt to these sorts of bumps or demographic pulls from industry. We're really tracking the program.

Part of the answer to your question is that we don't assign pilots to do staff positions as part of a normal rotation. In fact, most pilots want to stay on the flight line. They're less interested in the normal rotation where they would stop flying duties and move to staff officer duty. We'll use approaches like that to mitigate. It's very straightforward actually.

The Chair: Could we have a question and a response?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: I would like to talk about the ships named *Asterix* and *Obelix*.

The Davie shipyard, located close to Quebec City and to my constituency, has done something remarkable with *Asterix*. She is on time and on budget.

There were plans for a second supply ship, the *Obelix*. Why was that project turned down?

[*English*]

Ms. Jody Thomas: I'm happy to answer that.

"Strong, Secure, Engaged" is very clear that we would use the interim IAOR, the *Asterix*, and procure two joint supply ships through Vancouver Shipyards, and that's what's in the plan. At this point we have determined that the one interim vessel is fulfilling an enormous need. We're very pleased to have it, but what we want, and what the navy has asked for, and the chief of the defence staff has directed, is to procure the two joint supply ships through Vancouver Shipyards.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Vancouver Shipyards?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: In Vancouver?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Right.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You're ready to do that here in Quebec. Why not?

Ms. Jody Thomas: There is a difference between procuring two new ships that are built for purpose and procuring a refitted commercial vessel. It's not—

Mr. Gérard Deltell: It's useful. We have done that.

Ms. Jody Thomas: It is useful, but it's not a warship, and what we've determined we need is a warship, built for purpose.

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold it there.

If you could bear with us, we have to do our democratic duty, so I'll call the vote.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I believe we received a commitment from the minister for a progress report on the revision of service records, and hopefully that will tell us what that program is and what progress has been made. I just don't want that to disappear here, because people have been waiting a very long time.

The Chair: Fair enough. We know there's an undertaking to receive that.

Mr. James Bezan: [*Inaudible—Editor*] that was promised to come forward on the cost of the future fighter jet capability and the interim fighter jet capability that Mr. Yurdiga had asked for.

● (1045)

The Chair: Fair enough.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I'd like to ask for a recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Okay. I'll let the clerk manage that.

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT
Vote 1—Program Expenditures.....$587,881,292

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....$15,237,553,800
Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....$3,761,023,833
Vote 10—Grants and contributions.....$176,719,317

(Votes 1, 5, and 10 agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

MILITARY GRIEVANCES EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....$6,150,062

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

MILITARY POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....$4,288,506

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

OFFICE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT COMMISSIONER
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....$1,954,662

(Vote 1 agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

The Chair: Shall I report the votes on the main estimates 2018-19, less the amounts voted in the interim estimates, to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. James Bezan: On division.

The Chair: Thank you all very much for coming today. I thank you for your service to your country, and I guess we'll see you again.

The meeting is adjourned.

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